REMARKS

Claims 1-30 are pending in this application, with claims 1, 9, 16 and 22-30 being independent. Claims 1-3, 22, 25 and 28 have been amended. Favorable reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Applicants note with appreciation the allowance of claims 9-21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29 and 30.

Claims 1-8, 22, 25 and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being clearly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,724,882 (Eilbacher et al). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As recited in independent claim 1, the present invention relates to a system for observing calls made to a call center. In the system, an ACD unit, equipped with a service observation port, is arranged to receive incoming calls and to queue and switch the calls to various lines of the call center. An IVR unit is connected to the ACD unit, and arranged to interact with the caller via an interactive computer program. A recorder unit, located off-site from the call center, communicates with the ACD via the service observation port to record complete calls placed to the call center from beginning to end.

Independent claim 22 is directed to a method of observing calls to a call center. Independent claim 25 is directed to a computer program for implementing a method of observing calls to a call center. Independent claim 28 is directed to a system for observing calls to a call center, and is drafted in means-plus function form. All of these independent claims recite many of the salient features discussed above with respect to claim 1, and in particular all recite an ACD with a service observation port and a recording unit (or means) that is located off-site from the call center and that

communicates with the ACD unit via the service observation port, to record complete calls placed to the call center from beginning to end.

Touch-tone IVR systems, which were introduced well over a decade ago, are perhaps the most widespread class of human-computer interfaces. Since their inception, such systems have been adopted enthusiastically, particularly to perform customer-support type functions, and have permitted their adopters to reduce significantly the amount of man-power required to maintain a call center. When configured properly, IVR systems can allow more customers to be provided with more support and services more quickly than ever before, and can streamline the call center interaction process greatly.

Nonetheless, many calling customers classically have exhibited an antipathy towards IVR systems, viewing them as frustrating and difficult to use. Such problems generally stem not from the fact that interacting with an IVR system is an inherently complex task, but rather from the fact that the systems are often poorly configured, particularly from the point of view of their usability. As a result, it has become extremely desirous to the have tools which allow the manner in which an IVR system is used to be tracked and evaluated effectively, so that the systems usage may be assessed with an eye towards improvement.

The present invention provides such a tool, and in particular provides a tool for recording complete calls placed to the call center, from beginning to end, including recording prompts made by the IVR, caller responses to the prompts and information provided by the IVR. And by taking the unique approach of equipping the ACD with a service observation port and recording the calls with a recorder unit located off-site from

the call center that communicates with the ACD via that service observation port, the present invention overcomes many drawbacks that have heretofore plagued the prior art.

More specifically, some prior art systems have proposed that recording take place at the call center itself. Such an approach, while perhaps good for some intended applications, requires the installation and maintenance of recording equipment at the call center or the use of a live observer set up at the call center to listen to calls. Also, recordings must be transferred to another location for analysis, unless analysis equipment is also installed at the call center and trained personnel are available at the call center to run the equipment. Further, if a live observer is used, he or she must be trained as to the call flow of the call center's IVR system, and must know the options available to the caller as the caller interacts with the IVR system.

By equipping the ACD with a service observation port, and by recording calls with a recording unit that is located off-site and communicates with the ACD via the service observation port, these problems are overcome, and a more flexible system, that allows calls to be recorded and analyzed at a facility dedicated to assessing call center performance, results.

Eilbacher relates generally to methods for analyzing contact centers, and discusses so-called "cradle-to-grave" recording, in which all information related to a particular telephone call is recorded, from the time the call enters the contact center to the time the caller hangs up or the agent completes the transaction.

However, and significantly, in Eilbacher the recording plainly takes place within the contact center, and not off-site from it. That this is so is plain from Eilbacher, which describes that the recording:

> may take place on the trunk side of the PBX/ACD 102 by placing recording taps 220 on the public telephone service trunk lines 222 which supply the call center.

(col. 10:12-14). *See also* Eilbacher Fig. 4. Eilbacher's approach, therefore, is fundamentally different from that of the present invention.

In view of this fundamental difference -- between recording calls within a contact center on the one hand and recording calls off-site from the call center via a service observation port on the other -- Applicants respectfully submit that Eilbacher cannot possibly anticipate any of independent claims 1, 22, 35 or 28, and respectfully request the Examiner to remove the Section 102 rejection.

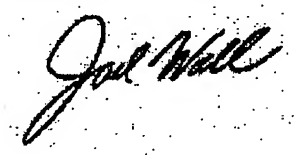
The remaining claims all depend from one of the independent claims discussed above, and each partakes in the novelty and non-obviousness of its respective base claim. In addition, each recites additional patentable features of the present invention, and individual reconsideration of each is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration and passage to issue of the present application.

If there are any fees due in connection with the filing of this response, please charge the fees to our Deposit Account No. 07-2347. If an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 not accounted for above is required, such an extension is requested and the fee should also be charged to our Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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